4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Section 4, Environmental Analysis, examines the potential environmental impacts of the Project and Project alternatives. This section includes analyses of the environmental issue areas listed below:

4.2 Biological Resources

4.3 Agricultural Resources

4.4 Geology and Soils

4.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

4.6 Hazards and Hazardous Materials

4.7 Air Quality

4.8 Traffic and Transportation

4.9 Noise

4.10 Cultural Resources

4.11 Aesthetic/Visual Resources

4.12 Land Use and Planning

4.13 Socioeconomic (Population/Housing/Public Services)

4.14 Recreation

4.15 Environmental Justice

Each issue area section provides background information and describes the environmental setting (baseline conditions) to help the reader understand the conditions that would cause an impact to occur. In addition, each section describes how an impact is determined to be "significant" or "less than significant". Finally, the individual sections recommend mitigation measures (MMs) to reduce significant impacts. The evaluation was organized and carried out in accordance with the CEQA (PRC Sections 21000 to 21177; Guidelines at Section 15000 et seq.) and the NEPA (40 CFR CH. V, Part 1500). The analysis fully discloses the environmental effects of the Project and alternatives.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Environmental Baseline

The analysis of each issue area begins with an examination of the existing physical setting (baseline conditions as determined pursuant to Section 15125(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines) that may be affected by the proposed Project. The effects of the proposed Project are defined as changes to the environmental setting that are attributable to Project components or operation.

Significance Criteria

Significance criteria are identified for each environmental issue area. The significance criteria serve as a benchmark for determining if a component action would result in a significant adverse environmental impact when evaluated against the baseline. According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a significant effect on the environment means "…a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the Project…".

Impact Analysis

Impacts are classified as:

- **Class I** (significant adverse impact that remains significant after mitigation);
- **Class II** (significant adverse impact that can be eliminated or reduced below an issue's significance criteria);

- **Class III** (adverse impact that does not meet or exceed an issue's significance criteria); or

- **Class IV** (beneficial impact).

A determination would be made, based on the analysis of any impact within each affected environmental issue area and compliance with any recommended mitigation measure(s), of the level of impact remaining in comparison to the pertinent significance criteria. If the impact remains significant, at or above the significance criteria, it is deemed to be Class I. If a "significant adverse impact" is reduced, based on compliance with mitigation, to a level below the pertinent significance criteria, it is determined to no longer have a significant effect on the environment, i.e., to be "less than significant" (Class II). If an action creates an adverse impact above the baseline condition, but such impact does not meet or exceed the pertinent significance criteria, it is determined to be adverse, but less than significant (Class III). An action that provides an improvement to an environmental issue area in comparison to the baseline information is recognized as a beneficial impact (Class IV).

Formulation of Mitigation Measures and Mitigation Monitoring Program

When significant impacts are identified, feasible mitigation measures are formulated to eliminate or reduce the level of the impacts and focus on the protection of sensitive resources. The effectiveness of a mitigation measure is subsequently determined by evaluating the impact remaining after its application. Those impacts meeting or exceeding the impact significance criteria after mitigation are considered residual impacts that remain significant (Class I). Implementation of more than one mitigation measure may be needed to reduce an impact below a level of significance. The mitigation measures recommended in this document are identified in the impact assessment sections and presented in a Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP). The MMP is provided in Section 6.0.

If any mitigation measures become incorporated as part of a Project's design, they are no longer considered mitigation measures under the CEQA. If they eliminate or reduce a potentially significant impact to a level below the significance criteria, they eliminate the potential for that significant impact since the "measure" is now a component of the action. Such measures incorporated into the project design have the same status as any "applicant proposed measures." The CSLC's practice is to include all measures to

eliminate or reduce the environmental impacts of a proposed project, whether applicant proposed or recommended mitigation, in the MMP.

Cumulative Impacts

Section 5.5, Summary of Cumulative Impacts, provides a list and map that identifies other related future projects near the location of the proposed Project and alternatives. Each issue area in Section 4 presents the cumulative impact scenario, the focus of which is to identify the potential impacts of the Project that might not be significant when considered alone, but that might contribute to a significant impact when viewed in conjunction with the other projects.

Impacts of Alternatives

Section 3, Alternatives, provides a list, description and map that identifies alternatives to the proposed Project. Each issue area in Section 4, Environmental Analysis, presents the impact analysis for each alternative scenario. A summary of the collective impacts of each alternative in comparison with the impacts of the proposed Project is included within the Executive Summary, Table ES-2.